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ABSTRACT

Increased functions of counselors has truly professionalized their roles in the school setting. The counselor needs to be highly trained and educated for the position. Continuous inservice education is necessary. Additional course work toward an advanced degree at a properly accredited university is a must. Engaging in research endeavors and consuming results from carefully designed experimental and descriptive surveys aid in updating the work of counselors. Reading professional literature applicable to the profession increases skills of school counselors. Attending professional meetings and conventions brings the latest in techniques, procedures, and approaches to counselors. Numerous means are available for counselors to stay current and abreast of developments in the profession. Counselors need to be flexible and open to new professional ideas within their profession. School counselors need to be competent in: (1) career education and curriculum; (2) effective communication skills; (3) group counseling procedures; (4) learners becoming increasingly capable of understanding the self; (5) evaluation procedures to determine quality in the counseling program; (6) assistance given to actual and potential dropouts; (7) aid provided to students failing in school; (8) post-high school information provided to students; and (9) help given to high school dropouts who can work in the direction of completing General Educational Development (GED) requirements. (ABL)

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Functions of the School Counselor

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FUNCTIONS OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

Increased functions of counselors has truly professionalized their roles in the school setting. The counselor needs to be highly trained and educated for the position. Continuous inservice education is necessary. Additional course work toward an advanced degree at a properly accredited university is a must. Engaging in research endeavors and consuming results from carefully designed experimental and descriptive surveys aid in updating the work of counselors. Reading professional literature applicable to the profession increases skills of school counselors in working more effectively with students. Attending professional meetings and conventions brings the latest in techniques, procedures, and approaches to counselors. Speaking at conventions requires securing background information relevant to share with listeners and the counseling profession. Writing for publication involves research, reading, and practical everyday experiences. Thus numerous means are available for counselors to stay current and abreast with developments in the profession, a true need for all.

Saliency in Counseling

What makes for a vital counseling curriculum? How can needs of students be met? Which types of inservice programs should be experienced by counselors? These are vital questions to answer and deliberate upon. Broad guidelines need to be presented here.

Students eventually need to choose and pursue a career. Each needs to be able to earn a living, as an adult. Counselors need to consult with teachers and administrators to develop and implement a quality career education curriculum. The curriculum should emphasize carefully chosen careers in units of study for elementary pupils with an awareness emphasis. Sequentially, junior and senior high students should have a career exploration and selection potential.

Objectives for these vital careers and for learner attainment must be selected in terms of relevance and salience. Learning opportunities must be implemented which guide students in goal attainment. A quality appraisal program needs to evaluate learner progress.

Counselors need to be well versed on careers in the community to provide needed information to students. Reference sources on the understanding level of learners must be available to students.

Faculty meetings and workshops on career education need to be in the offing. What does it profit a student to have all the general education possible and not be employable in a future career?

Second, counselors need to possess effective communication skills. Rapport must be in evidence in a counselor/counselee relationship. Feelings of goodwill and service must permeate these relationships. Problem solving skills are inherent. Thus the counselor/student need to be able to identify and clearly state a problem or problems. Data, critical thinking, and creative thinking must be brought to bear upon the problem. A hypothesis is then developed and tested in a life-like situation. Modification of the hypothesis might be an end result.

Third, group counseling skills need to be emphasized. Quality human relations should permeate among members. Discussion skills become salient such as staying on the topic being pursued, unless relevance indicates changing to a different problem. Rambling is to be avoided. All should participate in the discussion. No one should dominate. Interaction rather than coaction must be stressed. Topics vital to counselees in the group setting include:

A. Family problems.
B. Drug abuse.
C. Low esteem.
D. Poverty.
E. Feelings of isolation.
F. Unemployment of adult family members.
G. Abuse in its diverse forms.

Fourth, learners need to understand the self. In moving from childhood through adolescense, new stages of development are encountered. Relationships change toward parents, older, and younger students. Students raise questions about the self such as:

A. Who am I and what is my role in society?
B. How can I achieve my goals in life?
C. What can be done to gain and keep friends?
D. How might I be successful as far as schooling is concerned?
E. What can be done to get along well with parents, brothers, and sisters?

Bibliotherapy and other trade books, audio-visual materials, group sessions, and resource personnel might provide students with needed information as well as secure food for thought. The counselor needs to be a good listener to student problems and questions, develop empathy, encourage open-ended comments, and involve parents in a positive manner. The goal is to guide students to understand the self, others, and personal abilities at an increased level.

Fifth, a quality evaluation program must appraise the total guidance program. Questions which need answering from the appraisal are the following:

A. How well are the needs of individual students met?
B. How effective are group procedures of counseling?
C. How much are parents involved in an effective program to counsel and guide students?
D. How appropriate are individual and group tests in assisting learners in goal attainment?

E. How do follow-up results of student progress aid in higher quality choices and decisions made in life?

Appraisal programs should be comprehensive, continuous, diagnostic and remedial, as well as sequential to determine optimal student performance.

Sixth, a quality counseling program should identify potential as well as actual dropouts. Identification and knowledge of reasons for occurrences are musts. These students need to experience relevant objectives, sequential learning opportunities, and a vital evaluation program.

Alienated youth should also be a major concern of counselors, teachers, and administrators. Whatever the causes of alienation, students need guidance to become a part of a group and develop feelings of belonging. Definite goals need to be in the offing to assist the alientated to move away from the actual to the ideal. With cooperative efforts of school personnel, those learners who do not possess feelings of belonging and esteem can be aided to achieve increased success in relating to others. Intervention strategies are needed based on diagnosis, to decrease alienation and increase feelings of belonging.

Seventh, students who fail in high school need aid to make career choices. Options in careers need to be discussed and evaluated. These students need backing, support, and assistance. The student who is doing failing work should not fall through the cracks. Rather, a

carefully planned program of career opportunities need to be in the offing. Students who are frequently absent/tardy from school need guidance to perceive the values of formal education. Transfer of learning from the school curriculum to the world of work is a must. Each student has worth and needs to be perceived as a future productive member in society. Not providing for selected students (school failures, high absenteeism and tardiness, among others) is a negative approach and does not harmonize with democratic theory and philosophy of education.

Formal and informal evaluation procedures should be utilized to acertain interests, aptitudes, and potential of individual students. Traditional curricula need modification and change to provide for all students.

Eighth, counselors need to be well versed in post-high school education. This information needs to be passed on to involved students. Opportunities in college/university course work, junior or community colleges, and trade schools should be in the repetroire of counselors. Clear and concise information must be passed on, as needed, to counselees. The content needs to be accurate, meaningful, and up-to-date. Scholarships, grants, and loan information need sharing with students. No student that can benefit from it should be hindered from going further into the halls of learning. Students need to be aided in setting high attainable goals. Plans to achieve the goals must be

implemented. Continuous appraisal of movement in the direction of goal attainment, and evaluation of progress are roles for the student to establish and pursue.

Ninth, students who have dropped out of high school need to be sought. They need encouragement and counseling to return to school or work toward the GED. Dropouts have their potential, but have not realized potentialities. The role of the guidance counselor here is to seek and save that which was lost. Thus, students who are not in school and have not graduated should be guided to come back to secure a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Tenth, each student needs to achieve as optimally as possible. Learners need to receive the best instruction possible. Goals for students to achieve must be relevant and salient. Evaluation needs to pinpoint what students have and have not learned. Diagnosis and remediation need to follow that which students have not achieved.

In Summary

Much is expected of the guidance counselor in the school setting. Counselors need to be flexible and open to new professional ideas within their profession. Counselors then need to be competent in:

1. Career education and curriculum.
2. Effective communication skills.
3. Group counseling procedures.
4. Learners becoming increasingly capable of understanding the self.

5. Evaluation procedures to determine quality in the counseling program.
6. Assistance given to actual and potential dropouts.
7. Aid provided to students failing in school.
8. Post-high school information provided to students.
9. Help given to high school dropouts who can work in the direction of completing GED requirements.